

Propaganda and Media

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Propaganda is described as ‘influencing the opinion of people’ for good or bad. The concept of good or bad by itself is abstract in nature with no universal uniformity. Every state has the right to decide what is good or bad; usually the parliament or the constitution is the yardstick for such measures. In our country like so many other developing countries the battle between good and bad is intense and this is where the propaganda plays an important role. Today it is considered normal if any media presents any arguments irrespective of the origin of media itself but if the same arguments are put forward by the state then it is taken as propaganda, this is what we have to monitor and guard against.

Take the example of nuclear weapons the media creates an hype about their destructiveness and with repeated messages creates an air of negativity about them without understanding the consequences. In such scenario it is only our enemies who reap from such blatant attack on our capabilities. The point to bring home is that media is not a pillar of state as assumed rather it is a commercial enterprise just like any other merchandise with only one major difference where as many merchandise are non perishable the media thrives on the fact that its sole survival is on selling the news instantly, it is only through this sensationalism that it can harvest revenues through advertisement. Yet it wears a cloak of holiness.

Till late nineties there were only few media outlets namely newspapers , television and radio all state owned. It was the propaganda which created a doubt around their authenticity and foreign press and media was given credibility. Few knows that till mid fifties the Voice of America was broadcasting in 38 countries around the clock. In the 1948 Italian elections Americans influenced the outcome by using propaganda in order to influence the voters against the communist. In recent history all elections in Pakistan are treated with suspicion mainly basing upon few incidences but given an hype by the foreign press which in any case are an extension of foreign powers foreign policies. Take the example of Libya, Egypt and now Syria where the propaganda is responsible for the downfall of regimes and creating instability from which only the western powers have benefited. It is a fact that the prices of oil were dropped in USA from 3.49 \$ a gallon to 2.99 \$ after the fall of Libya, the rebels agreed to sell the oil at reduced price to repay the freedom. Syria is another target nowa days where stories of human rights violations are given so much hype and such a rosy picture is painted about the opposition that everything will be rectified after the ouster of present regimes. Same heaven was promised during Libyan crisis but look at the end result.

On domestic scene the mushrooms of media channels and houses which in fact are monopoly of few families are influencing the minds of people. They have partially succeeded in creating a mindset in which all rulers are depicted as corrupt and money makers having no regard for national interest all in the name of free press and voice. Yet the same media has never ever reported about fellow colleagues of media who are involved in corruption and tax evading, rather the third person term is used and never the name of concerned media channel is given 'one of the channel' is the common term. In case if you want to visit the offices of these media houses it comes as surprise that there are no specific hours of business, they do not allow any recording of their working environments, they have occupied parking places on public roads by erecting barriers yet it is the same media house which have taken as their birth right to walk into any public or private place and pass on judgement on the conduct of government officials.

To these media house there is no national interest, Indian songs, movies, dramas, and culture is copied and shown around the clock. There is a tirade against the state and its functioning, mockery and mimicking the prime minister and president is order of the day all aiming at reducing the respect of high offices. Ever wonder why there is no such programme on the media house themselves? Pakistan Television and all related information and media channels are taken to courts to stop them from passing on the state's version, to curb the efforts of state to raise the morale of nation.

Pakistan certainly requires state owned, operated media organs to disseminate the information which it deems essential to the masses. It is illogical to even conceive that there is nothing positive about the state and everything is dark. It is humiliating to hear characterless anchorpersons echoing at shrilling voice that 'nation is morally bankrupt now', another anchor person preferring Ethiopia over Pakistan.

One certainly appreciates truth but one has to understand the truth itself. States do not run on idealism but on realism. The seasonal experts on everything ranging from military affairs to economics to foreign policy are more harmful than having any useful purpose. The gravity of the situation can be gauged from the fact that any legislation which restricts this anti state tirade is taken as an attack on press and freedom of expression. The international community which in fact are the sponsors of such media houses are the first to stand with these malicious creatures. On the other hand all those who have travelled or lived abroad will testify the strictness of media regulations in western countries. In USA the leading papers have seldom criticised their own governments on key issues, there are no nightly talk shows where the foreign policy is taken to the task by novices having degrees in fashion designing. In United Kingdom the royalty is never a matter of laugh, privacy of individuals is paramount with no one even taking pictures of any other person without consent.

Media is a business and it should be treated as such without any preferential treatment. They were pillar of state as long as the state is running the affairs but in any other capacity it is nothing more than a money making machine and never to be trusted with serious task of building national morale or character. One must encourage watching of Pakistan Television among the family and troops.

